

Halo: Nova

by Toa of War

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Summary: Follow Clayton and Fireteam Nova as they fight the nightmare that was the Human-Covenant War and beyond. From Rebels, Flood, Covenant Remnant, and the Prometheans, Clayton must either lead Nova to victory and the survival of the Human race...or to the end of all they have known.

## 1. Welcome to Reach

\*\*[Hello everyone! This is just the beginning of a brand new story based around Halo. This one is actually the first story I have ever come up with and I have everything planned from now to the time of Halo 5: Guardians. RWBY: AoC will be updated shortly and another Halo fanfiction centering around the Warzone maps should be released soon. So, please enjoy a story I've been creating for the past five years and see another spectrum of the Halo universe from the perspective of another Spartan. Be prepared, this is just the beginning...]\*\*

\*\*[Additionally, I set up a character guide that I will update when major characters are added or go MIA (Spartans Never Die, bitches!). People will die though so...yeah. But I suggest you guys check out the character guide which details the armor, colors, and preferred weapons of each character currently active in the story.]\*\*

\_Screams. Nothing but screams. Those were the last memories he had of his homeworld, Freedom. His home lay in ruins, his mother slain right before his eyes by the hand of a towering Sangheili Ultra. He had no father. The father left a long time ago, an amount of which could not be remembered, to fight the Covenant. But he never returned. The Battle of Jericho VII had claimed him. Now the Fall of Freedom took his mother away as well. A ten year old boy shouldn't know this type of pain. The aching heart he had, the want to do something, but the lack of strength to do so. Now an alien stood before him, energy sword drawn, the elegant blue light illuminating the small corner the boy had tucked himself into. He met the figures gaze, yellow eyes

meeting his brown. Tears welled up in his eyes. Was he worried this was the end? Yes. But what bothered him wasn't simply that: He only wanted to have it all back. His final moments would be spent dreaming of the life he could've had. Growing up with both parents, hanging out with his best and pretty much only friend, growing up and getting into trouble in his teenage years only to turn around in the adult world and make a living with a woman that he would love. No, he would never have that...\_

\_Or so the boy thought. When the towering alien reared its arm back to bring its blade down on the poor child, it found itself suddenly caught with its sword on the ground and arm pinned behind its back. The boy looked for the savior, eventually resting his eyes on a man of great stature. A man of which did not possess a face or body of flesh, but rather a dark green metal. The metal was scratched with smears of dirt and muck spattered in random locations. The glass plate that covered where his eyes should have been bore a large crack reaching from the leftmost edge to the uppermost area of its middle section. He had pinned the Sangheili to the ground, knife in hand, but two more aliens of the same race prevented him from dealing the killing blow. The new arrivals wore armor issued to Minors of their Holy Covenant, and surely the man of green could easily take their lives from them. But the Ultra stood, regaining its energy sword. The boy knew he couldn't simply watch. If he didn't intervene, the distracted warrior would be torn apart by the Sangheili's wrath. He looked around in panic, locating a small shard of glass to his right. It was triangular, jagged, with a sharp point at the end. He got to his feet and started forward, remaining as silent as possible. The Sangheili had its sword ready to plunge deep into the man's 'flesh'. The boy wouldn't allow another life to be lost because they were defending him.\_

\_The boy didn't know what happened. Something had broke inside of him, releasing a rage he never knew he had. Now a Sangheili Ultra lay at his feet, a shard of glass sticking from its throat. Dark blue blood painted the area around the alien's head. The boy crouched beside it, looking into its hand. The hilt of its energy sword was still wrapped in its fingers. The boy touched its skin. It was rough and odd. He removed the four fingers that grasped the weapon, and removed it from the corpse. He stared at it as he stood. Tightening his grip on the hilt, the energy blade activated. The impressive florescent blue took a very streamlined shape which pointed away from his hand. It was then he realized the man before him, towering high with two mangled alien corpses. He quickly shut off the weapon, attempting to shove it in his pocket. The warrior stopped him, carefully grabbing a hold of his wrist and easily removing the sword from him. He examined it and said: "Keep this, in remembrance of this place. In remembrance of her." He turned his head to look at the remains of the boy's mother before looking back down at him. The reflection of fire and people running was reflected in his visor. "And to remember your first kill."\_

\* \* \*

><p><strong>PRESENT DAY<br>PLANET REACH  
>UNSC Marathon-Class Cruiser, <em>The Voyager<em>

><strong>\*\*2552\*\*

"Why do you think ONI is sending Spartans to do the job of local

military, Clay?" Joe asked. The White-Spartan sat on a metal bench, observing his knife before sliding it back into the sheath located on his left rib cage.

"Honestly, I don't know. I like to think its a simple drill, but now a days no ones sure." Clayton answered. His black and orange armor still retained small amounts of shine. Two years after graduation from the top secret Echo-Company project and he still had only fought rebels. Weren't Spartan-IIIs meant to fight Covenant?

"Do you think its Covenant? I mean, quite honestly, I don't know an insurrection in existence that has been able to make a whole city go dark without the UNSC hearing about it. Especially on Reach!" Joe stated, standing to face his locker.

"No, not the Covenant. Not on Reach." He removed an energy sword from his locker. The one he took when he was ten. The one he took from his first kill. He stuck it to his thigh.

"Clay, you know just as much as I do that its possible. Why do you fight the idea that it might just be them." Joe placed his Mk. V helmet over his head, muffling his last words.

Clayton slid his own EOD helmet on and slid his DMR onto the magnetic clamp on his back. He sighed. "I know its a possibility. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if we go to Stellar City and find them , its the results that will come from them landing here that I'm deathly afraid of."

Joe looked to the floor, obviously imagining the casualties and loss should Winter Contingency be declared. Reach was the last fortress world before Earth and, once the Covenant got to the heart of the Human race, well, all would seem to be lost. He looked back to his old friend and nodded. "They're definitely no rebels or plain bullies from junior high." Joe had a small smile under his faceplate, which Clayton shared.

"Spartans Clayton Echo-159 and Joseph Echo-178 please report to the hanger bay. Falcons are ready to take you to your destination." The loud speaker above them was extremely loud. It got their attention, so it did it's job.

Joe looked at Clayton. "I hate it when they use my actual name." He had an annoyed tone in his voice, something that didn't normally happen with the mellowed out Spartan. He grabbed his sniper rifle and slid it onto his back. "You ready? Preston is gonna have our throats if we don't get there, like, now."

"Yeah, lets go. And you can't hate your father forever."

Joe simply shrugged with small amounts of difficulty before the pair left the small Spartan armory, joining the everyday traffic in the tight halls. The Spartan-IIIs towered over the other personnel, multiple Marines looking up at them in utter awe and shock. Clayton could swear that one of them had fear in her eyes. The Spartans marched through the halls, boots clanking as they stepped on the metal floor. They made left turn at a T in the hallway, the directory stating the hanger was in that direction. As they walked, Clay observed the happenings in his HUD. Ammo counter, shield strength and armor integrity, and the radar that was overwhelmed with friendly

blips of yellow were all active and running appropriately. A massive spike of activity showed up on the device as soon as they entered the hanger. For the most part, the hanger contained engineers and pilots working diligently to maintain Longswords and Pelicans. Otherwise, troop Warthogs ferried Marines and other personnel around the ship. A single Elephant sat in the middle of the hanger, looming over anything that passed it. Clayton and Joe approached a single Falcon with two additional Spartans talking near it.

"Ah, finally. You two ready?" The Spartan of Blue asked.

"Yes, Sir." Clayton responded. Joe cut right into a question.

"Preston, do you think we are dealing with covies?"

The team leader looked towards Joe before looking to the ground. "I don't know. But I hope not." Preston's deep voice had a hint of sorrow in it, indicating he new something was out of place.

The second Spartan had walked to the cockpit of the Falcon and talked with the pilot. Now he approached the other three Spartans of Nova. His lime green armor bore scratches, just a little less than Preston's, indicating the pair had more of a veteran status compared to Clay and Joe. After all, they were from Beta-Company.

"Commander, we have the greenlight." He said.

"Thank you, Nathan. Everybody, lets saddle up!" Preston commanded.

Clayton climbed into the Falcon and sat near the rear, on the double-seat. Nathan sat next to him and Preston sat on the single seat across. Joe sat on one of the side seats looking outside of the helicopter. Preston banged on the hull of the Falcon, and the pilot started the air vehicle. The propellers whirled as the Falcon lifted off the metal floor. As they exited \_The Voyager\_, the impressive mountains of Reach drew their attention.

"Captain Olecksi, Nova is clear of \_The Voyager\_." Preston reported over communications.

A voice with a thick Russian accent responded. "Thank you, Commander. Good luck on your mission. Be careful and remain vigilant."

A massive roar shook the area behind the Falcon. Clayton looked back and saw \_The Voyager\_ ascending into the atmosphere, disappearing amongst the clouds.

"Hope you brought something to play with Nova, we have a ride ahead of us." Preston stated, shifting in his chair whilst holding a tac-pad.

Clayton slowly leaned his helmeted head back on the seat. He caught a glimpse of Joe, looking over the mountains as they flew by. He was dead silent. Clayton shut his eyes, wanting to gain a little more sleep before they landed. It was only a little bit after the break of dawn after all.

\* \* \*

><p>"Alright, Nova! Prepare for landing!" Preston yelled.<p>

Nathan shook Clayton awake, his vision briefly groggy before restoring itself. He took a look at the surroundings, what was once mountains and countless trees had since turned into massive sky scrappers and extensive highways. Clayton stretched his arms outward and briefly yawned under his helmet.

"You alright there, 159?" Preston asked, his head slightly cocked to the side.

Clayton gave a thumbs up. Nathan chimed in. "He's just recovering from his beauty sleep, Sir."

Clayton smiled under his faceplate as he heard Joe chuckle over TEAMCOM. "If anyone needs beauty sleep, its you Nathan."

The lime green Spartan grunted in response as the falcon began to descend on the roof of a sky scrapper, more specifically, an ONI communications building.

"So, we can't be the only Spartans investigating an anomaly like this." Clayton brought up.

Preston looked up at him, holding his BR-55 by the barrel in his left hand, the butt resting on the floor. "We are the only Spartan team deployed to Stellar City. However, there is another anomaly occurring at the Visegrad relay station. Noble Team was sent to investigate." The Blue Spartan Commander explained.

"Wait. Visegrad relay? That's not far from here. Is anyone else seeing a problem here?" Clayton asked.

Joe snorted. "I saw an issue the second I heard a whole city went dark. You a little slow today, Clay?" He teased.

"No, just making sure we are connecting the dots."

The Falcon made its final landing on a small helicopter pad that jutted out the side of the building. It touched down and Joe instantly slid his body off the side, boots making a loud thud as he hit the pad. He aimed his Sniper Rifle near a door way before scanning the surrounding area for hostiles. Clay's radar was clear, save the three yellow dots that marked the other Spartans. But he knew Joe was cautious, obviously checking for anything on a nearby building with a want to take the head off a Spartan. The Falcon officially landed, the propellers ceasing to whirl, also reducing the wind it was kicking up. Clayton stepped off the helicopter, instantly noticing the darkened sky. Clouds covered Reach's sun and rainstorms were threatening to start. he could already see the lightning off in the distance. The Pilot came up over the communications.

"You boys hurry up, but be careful. This thing won't do to well in a thunderstorm."

"Affirmative, Lieutenant. We will be in and out." Preston responded.

Preston pointed two fingers ahead, towards a doorway. "Nova,

proceed."

"Permission to take point, Sir?" Clayton asked.

"Granted. Move up."

Clayton approached the doorway, reaching his hand out to a terminal in the wall next to the door. He firmly pressed the and the door slid upward, into the ceiling. He immediately drew his DMR, finding it aiming down a dark hallway, the only light being the small daylight the let in and a flickering light bulb at the end of the passage. He proceeded forward, activating his night vision.

"Nova, night vision." He stated, not exactly in a commanding tone as he thought Preston wouldn't approve of him taking command like that, but he said nothing. Rather, his status light on Clay's HUD turned green, indicating he had received and obeyed the order.

Clayton placed that behind him. He continued his march through the darkened hall, everything illuminated with a slight tint of green. Eventually, the squad found the end of the hall. Preston came up on TEAMCOM.

"Nova, according to the holo-map of the building, we have to move left at this T."

Clayton continued to lead the way as he turned left, carefully checking the corner. Nothing. This hallway was even darker than the last. It was quite eerie, not a single sound emitting from anywhere besides the clank of their boots.

"Nova, there should be an elevator up ahead with a staircase immediately to it's right. Head down that stair case two floors." Preston commanded.

Nathan came up over TEAMCOM. "Why can't we just take the elevator?"

'You should know the answer to that." Preston answered.

"Look, that op on Pisces was an accident."

"Either way, we take the stairs."

"Fine."

Clayton racked his brain for anything he learned about the battle of Pisces. Nova was present, he and Joe weren't active members, them only nearing the end of boot camp at the time, but three other Spartans made up the former Nova with Preston and Nathan. Preston had sent the other three to secure an area within one of the larger buildings, the group deciding to take the elevator. Covenant Jiralhanae cut the chord and the elevator dropped several scores worth of feet, instantly killing one Spartan. The other two were mauled to death by the damn apes, but they died fighting. Every member of Nova dies fighting if they can, usually removing their helmets before death. A tradition among members of the team, removing their helmet and showing the world they are human inside the armored shell. Kinda dark, but tradition was tradition.

Nova had already begun descending down the stairs, on their way to a control room, some form of command center. Clayton checked the hallway as they entered the lower level, then continued his course. He looked up and saw a sign, barely keeping itself online, that read 'Command Center'.

"Found it." Clayton reported.

"Good, move in." Preston commanded.

Clayton complied with the orders, slowly taking his time as he moved inside the large room. It was pitch black, but his night vision outlined a majority of the things inside. Bodies were everywhere.

"Dear god..." Joe whispered, but loud enough to be caught by TEAMCOM.

Clayton felt terrible for the people caught by whoever or whatever had committed this massacre, but they had to finish the mission.

"I suggest we fan out, find a power source." He recommended.

"Good, move out." Preston responded.

Green status lights illuminated Clay's HUD as the other three Spartans spread out across the room. Clayton walked in between two rows of computer consoles, observing some of the flickering screens. Body after body lay dead at the desks.

'Some people didn't even have a chance to get out of their seats' He thought in despair.

The Spartans' worst fears were slowly being confirmed. First the countless bodies, and then what he found next sent a small chill down his spine. Plasma burns, all over the walls. Gashes in certain computer consoles, indicating that something had slashed them open. One more discovery, and the picture was painted. He walked towards a corner of the room, squinting his eyes to make sure what he saw was true. A Sangheili Zealot lay defeated in the corner, but multiple humans were scattered around it, all holding blunt or sharp objects. One human corpse lay on top of the Sangheili's, its hand still barely grasping a small pocket knife that was buried in the alien's throat. In turn, two scorch marks were left in the man's abdomen, telling that the Zealot took him down with it.

"Commander!" Clay turned to face the rest of the unit.

At that moment, Joe found a switch that reactivated the power to that room. All at once, as the lights flickered on and Nova turned to face Clayton's find, all their radars filled with random yellow dots, floating around the small oval shape.

"Shit." Clayton said aloud.

Seconds later they were on top of the Spartans. Sangheili Zealots dropped from the ceiling, their cloaking deactivating as they hit the ground. A Zealot landed directly next to Clay, swinging its sword at him. Clayton noticed in time, ducking under the attempted strike. However, the alien warrior still cut into his right EVA shoulder pad.

Clayton drove the butt of his rifle into the Zealot's stomach, knocking the air out of it. He then kicked it to the ground, popping it's shields. One shot to the head with his DMR was all, and the alien was dead with a hole in his face. Joe had slipped his Sniper Rifle onto his back, drawing dual M6G pistols, the Marine variants. He fired a continuous stream of rounds at a single Zealot, firing each Magnum one after the other due to it's slow rate of fire. Eventually, he popped the energy shields of his opponent before driving a bullet through its forehead. Preston and Nathan found themselves with their backs against the wall. The Spartan Commander fired constant bursts of his battle rifle, depleting another Sangheili's shielding, but the alien dove behind the computer desks before he could kill it. He yanked the magazine from the stock and dropped it to the floor before smacking another one into the gun. Nathan had just finished reloading his MA5C assault rifle before releasing a barrage of bullets onto another enemy.

Clayton found the Zealot Preston had fired upon crouched behind the desks. The Spartan vaulted over the desk behind the alien, activating his energy sword. He forced it downwards, the Sangheili rolling backwards and causing Clay to drive the blade through the floor. He quickly removed it, swinging his arm backwards to try and strike the warrior. He was met by another energy blade, a brilliant light flashing as the made contact. Clayton felt the Elite grip the back of his head, his helmet suddenly jerking forward. The immense strength of the Sangheili dragged the Spartan off his feet and flung him a mere two, Clayton landing on his back. The Zealot attempted to drive the blade into Clay, but failed when a sniper round exploded it's throat. As the alien collapsed, Clayton looked up from where he lay, getting an upside down view of Joe lowering his SRS.

Both Preston and Nathan lowered their weapons, Nathan kicking an Elite corpse riddled with bullet holes. Clayton observed his radar, it was still jammed.

"Wait a minute..."

Suddenly, another Zealot landed behind Nathan. The Sangheili drew it's sword and grabbed Nathan's shoulder, driving the blade through his chest.

"Aahhh!" The Spartan screamed in agony.

The Elite pulled it's blade out, letting the limp body fall to the ground, making a loud clattering sound. Preston and Clayton fired rounds off at the Zealot, only for it to growl at them before making for the door. It escaped through the corridor, bullets grazing the steel walls as it fled.

"Somethings not right here! Zealots don't normally flee like that!" Joe stated, concern in his voice.

"He's calling in reinforcements! I just picked up a foreign comm spike! You two, chase that bastard down!" Preston ordered.

Clayton and Joe flicked their status lights green, moving to exit the room in pursuit of the being who ended their friend and comrade. As they exited, Preston knelt down beside the scarlet-drenched armor of Nathan, cursing under his breath. Nathan's status light official began to show itself as KIA on everyone's HUD.



"Damn it." Clay whispered as he and Joe navigated the halls.

Clayton approached a corner and a red dot appeared on his radar. "Oh no you don't!"

The Zealot swung it's sword out from the behind the wall as Clayton dropped down to a slide. He skillfully regained his footing before propelling himself into the Sangheili. The alien smacked against the wall and Clayton used all his might to lift the Elite. Taking notice of the elevator they passed on their way down the stairs earlier, he heaved the body into the small box, then slammed his fist onto the button for the floor just below them. The doors to the elevator shut, but when the outer shaft doors went to close, Clay forced both his hands in between them and held them open. The elevator began to descend with the Zealot inside.

"Joe! S-shoot the c-c-cable!"

The sniper took aim and pulled the trigger. The cable snapped with a loud crack and Clay could hear the screeching of the metal grinding against the walls, ended by a loud crash that echoed throughout the building.

"Well...I think its dead. But your buying ONI the new elevator." Joe said with amusement.

"Heh, something tells me that it won't matter real soon." Clayton answered.

\* \* \*

><p>The pair of Spartans ran outside the front doors of the building into the streets. Preston had ordered them out there and the lieutenant who flew the Falcon wasn't responding. The commander crouched beside a car in the middle of the street, Nathan's corpse wasn't with him. Clayton and Joe ran over to his position as a hail storm of plasma bolts on top of them. Clayton ducked under some, a few making his shielding shimmer as they absorbed a few blows. Clayton dove behind the car with Preston, Joe replicating the action.<p>

"Commander?! Wheres the body?" Clayton asked.

"Couldn't retrieve it. But I do have these." Preston held up a set of dog tags.

Clayton nodded. "What are we dealing with?"

"That split-lip managed to call in reinforcements. I used a translator to de-crypt most of the message. Apparently, Stellar City is being used as a staging ground for an invasion." Preston responded.

Clayton briefly shook his head as Preston continued. "But we now have two Wraiths and a about three lances of Covenant troops converging on this position."

"What about the Lieutenant?" Joe asked, concerned.

Preston pointed to some wreckage. wreckage of a Falcon. "Found it covered in Buggers when I got out here. Poor guy." He said with a plain voice.

"Well what do we do?" Clayton asked, a plasma mortar strike landing 20 feet away.

"I haven't been able to get into contact with anyone outside of the cities parameters, meaning the Covenant are jamming our long range comms."

"They'd do anything to kill a 'demon', let alone three." Joe stated. He stuck his head out from behind the car to observe. He ducked back down as a pink streak flew past where his head used to be.

"Needle Rifles...great." He said. "The Wraiths appear to be holding position near the end of the block. Jackal snipers are set up flanking each one, but they appear to only be armed with Needle Rifles. Otherwise, just Grunts and their Elite officers cautiously pushing forward." He reported.

"Alright." Preston started. "Open fire on them. Get back into cover if those Jackals pop your shields. We need to eliminate as many as possible so we can run and not get gunned down."

Green status lights went up as the three lifted their weapons up and over the car. The loud crack of Joe's Sniper Rifle, the blunt sound of Clay's DMR, and the purr of Preston's Battle Rifle bursting filled the air. Clayton dropped an Elite before aiming at a trio of Grunt Minors and one Major. Four 'clacks' later, and they all laid lifeless in the street. Joe was focusing his fire on the Jackals, eliminating them one by one. His shields popped, however, and he ducked into cover. He released the empty magazine in the long rifle and replaced it with a full one, pulling the bolt back. Preston himself had downed the gunners for the Wraith's plasma turrets, thus stopping the constant stream of plasma fire. Clayton had since regained his cover, reloading his marksman rifle. As he rose, a stream of energy struck him, depleting his shields and scorching his chest plate. The sudden heat was intense even through his armor.

"Ah! Shit that burned!" He yelled as he slid down the car, planting his butt on the road. Preston ducked down to observe him. Clayton shook his hand in the air. "I'm fine, Sir!"

The Spartan got back up on his feet, firing more rounds down the road. Wraith mortars drew closer and closer as the drivers sighting in their targets.

"Sir, I think we have to move!" Joe yelled, his shields popping for the third time in the firefight.

"Your right. Fall back!" He ordered.

The three Spartans left cover, roadie running to avoid fire. They had their sights on turning around the corner and possibly trying to book it, but that was thwarted by a single well placed Wraith shot. Preston collapsed onto his back after the plasma mortar exploded before him. Clayton ran up to his leader, placing his DMR onto his back. lifting his upper half off the ground and slipping his arms under Preston's armpits, Clay dragged him behind a small pillar in

front of what appeared to be a museum building. Joe provided cover fire as he did so, trying his hardest to at least deter the Covenant tanks. Clayton laid Preston on the pillar, made from a gray marble.

"Sir! You still there?!"

"Barely..." Preston answered.

Clayton got a good look at his armor. The front was charred black, much like his own chest plate. Preston's visor was covered in cracks, only a small portion still intact. Some of the tech suit worn under the Mjolnir armor was torn and tattered. He must of taken a real bad hit, as that didn't happen much.

"Cl-...Clayton..."

"Yes, Preston?"

"Nova...lead the team...its up to you now."

"Sir, don't talk like that! I'll carry you out and get you a combat surgeon."

"No..." Preston groaned.

He reached up and removed his recon helmet. Blood trickled out of the corners of his mouth. He coughed once. The man was in pain, but was trying pretty damn hard not to look weak. His eyes, once a dark green, now were clouded and gray.

"Sir, with all due respect, I can't..."

"Yes, you can. You always had the ability. Why do you think I requested you specifically when you graduated. With Joe, hell, you two seem to operate just fine when your together. Build a new Nova, Clay. Lead them to the end, be it the end of humanity, or the end of you." Preston stared deeply into Clayton's visor.

Clayton nodded, accepting that his leader was fated to die here. He was to assume the mantle.

"Now get out of here, Commander." Preston said, using Clayton's new title with a sly smile on his face. He reached under his chest plate, pulling a set of dog tags out and snapping the chain that held it around his neck. Additionally, he pulled out Nathans from his utility. He raised his hand and Clayton met it with a tight grip. As Preston let go, the dog tags rested in Clayton's palm. He stored them with his ammunition.

"Yes, Sir." Clayton responded.

He stood and readied himself to sprint as Joe ran past, plasma fire following him. Clayton took off after him, the pair sprinting down the road towards the cities edge, and the forest.

Preston laid on the pillar of marble, contemplating his final moments. His memories flowed through him, spanning from the last moments of his homeworld, boot camp, and all the missions and battles he served in prior to this moment. He heard the Covenant troops

marching towards his location at a fast pace. He reached to his thigh, pulling an M6G Magnum from it's magnetic holster. It was the Marine Corps variant, slowly rate of fire but a higher accuracy. The thing also didn't come with a smart-link scope, but that wouldn't matter here. Several Sangheili marched past him, followed by several Unggoy. He raised the sidearm and fired. A bullet struck a Sangheili, making it's shield glare. It turned in response, two more rounds striking it. The shielding it possessed popped. It ducked under additional rounds, but Preston managed to place a bullet into it's heel. It growled in anger as it messed up it's footing, stumbling to the ground. Grunts opened fire on him, his lack of shielding meant he felt every plasma round that hit him. He gritted his teeth as two struck him, one in the lower stomach and the other his left shoulder. He turned his fire on the arthropods, killing them with ease.

The Sangheili stood back up, it's shielding fully recovered. Preston noticed and pulled the trigger on the alien. The muzzle flashed as the bullet left the gun, striking the Elite's shoulder. Preston pulled the trigger twice more, noticing that no more rounds were being fired. The Sangheili now loomed over him, growling intensely. It was only a Major. Preston stared up at it with hatred. The alien activated an energy dagger from it's wrist guard when a 'click' caught it's attention. A grunt had approached and stared at Preston's hand, running away in fright. A frag grenade lacking a pin rested in his palm.

"Burn in Hell, you hinge-head fu..."

\* \* \*

><p>Clayton ran up the ridge, making it to the trees. He heard an explosion off in the distance, in the city. Joe emerged from the trees, rifle drawn.<p>

"Back up, you split-jawed...Clayton?"

Joe lowered his SRS and Clayton nodded in response. He began to walk towards his friend.

"Wheres Preston?" He asked.

Clayton didn't respond with his voice, catching his breath. He just did a full on sprint through the city and up a steep hill. He may be a super soldier, but he needed to breath. Just like any other human. Instead of talking, he moved his thumb over his throat and dragged it across, running over his Adam's apple before flicking his thumb outward.

Joe sighed. "Shit. What do we do?"

"We run until we can fight. By the way..."

"I know." Joe interrupted.

Clayton looked at him. Joe stared back as if he knew the quizzical look behind his face plate. "You don't need to tell me what he said. I knew you were next in line." The white Spartan explained.

"I still don't get it." Clayton shook his head as he walked past Joe at a quickened pace.

"You will eventually, my friend. Eventually. So where do we go? Covenant are still blocking our long range communications so we can't exactly get a ride home." Joe asked.

Clayton stopped briefly, listening to a slow hum. He looked into the sky as a Phantom flew overhead. It stopped above the trees about a mile and a half away before lowering itself. Clayton chuckled.

"We are Spartans. If we can't get a ride home from our own boys, then I'm not gonna be afraid to steal one from some alien bastards."

## 2. Nova Reborn

\*\*[Here is chapter 2 for Halo: Nova! I hope its alright considering it jumps around quite a bit. I see it as a necessary bridge between chapter 1 and 3. Some pretty important things do occur in this chapter so it's definitely worth a read or else the following won't make sense. Anyways, there are a few questions I feel I should answer: 1. Clayton's energy sword acts like a lightsaber, it doesn't have an amount of charges indicating how many times he can swing it. 2. Echo Company is an OC company I made. The story behind it was ONI decided that another batch of S-IIIs were required but they didn't want them to be as expendable as traditional S-IIIs. Therefore, Echo Company is a middle ground between S-II and S-III, being better than most S-IIIs but not able to exactly match S-IIs. Moving on from that, you may realize that even though Clayton is a Captain (Marine Corps) and still calls Oleksi Sir even though their rank is somewhat similar, it's merely because of Oleksi heading the ship Fireteam Nova deploys from. With all that out of the way, on to the chapter...] \*\*

Spartans Clayton and Joe stalked through the forest with an unimaginable grace. One would think the clunky armor that was the Mark V. (which acted as a base armor for Spartan personnel unless they choose to utilize the full Mark V.) would hinder their ability to maneuver. While it did prevent certain basic actions, like the simple act of shrugging, Mark V. was in no means restricting to a well trained Spartan. The pair had found themselves stuck outside the boundaries of Stellar City, two confirmed KIAs, and no certain way of making it home. But that never stopped ideas from being formed.

"There it is." Clay stated as he observed the small Covenant encampment. Joe and himself had hidden in a bush at to top of a hill that sloped down into the small outpost. The Phantom that had passed over them just a few minutes ago was still hovering just above the ground. Unggoy and Sangheili unloaded supplies while Kig-yar were posted as snipers watching the surrounding area. Every Covenant in this sector must of heard of the four demons that arrived at the city. However, while these aliens were on guard, they showed more signs of content rather than concern. The deaths of Nathan and Preston must have reached them as well.

"What do you suggest?" Joe asked, careful with how he was holding his SRS so the barrel didn't stick out of the leaves. He had the hood of his Tactical/Patrol chest plate up over his helmet. Joe's armor was comprised of mostly white color with a hint of silver detail, something that doesn't exactly camouflage one while in a forest. The

past two years of Nova fighting rebels consisted of a surprising amount of winter warfare, thus Joe's coloration. He had grown so used to it that he simply refused to change his color. Many thought him suicidal or stupid, but Clayton knew him. He was good at covering up tracks. As for the hood, Clay concluded that it had simply become instinct.

"We need to find a point of entry where we won't be detected. I'd like to get aboard that Phantom without any Covenant noticing us."

"Discreet. Got it." The Spartan of white responded.

Clayton continued to observe even the simple things. Where one specific Kig-yar always looked, when there wasn't any Covenant carrying cargo out of the ship, and the surrounding area. A thick tree with with a high canopy stood fairly close to where the Phantom hovered.

"Got it. We climb that tree and wait for it to take off. Once it does, we leap into the troop bay from the branches. Any poor son-of-a-bitch inside will get popped." Clayton explained.

"Sounds good. I'm ready." Joe responded.

Clayton jerked his head to the side, silently indicating his friend to follow as he moved through the bushes around the encampment. They pairing stealthily moved through the bushes, watching their footsteps. A single snap of a twig could instantly give them away. They Spartans eventually made it to the base of the tree. Clayton lifted his DMR and placed it on the magnetic clamp located on his back. The Spartan grabbed a hold of the lowest tree branch, tugging on it to ensure how safe it was. Figuring it was safe, he hoisted himself up and continued his climb, Joe not far behind. Luckily, the tree had many branches to cling to. Clayton periodically looked to the encampment, making sure they hadn't been noticed. If they had been, which they weren't, both of them would've been caught completely exposed.

"Now we play the waiting game." Joe stated once they reached the desired height.

Almost the second he said that, the Phantom lifted off the ground. "Nevermind, I swear things happen in spite of me."

Clayton leapt from the tree branch. The timing couldn't have been more perfect. His armor scrapped down the side of the bay doors as they shut. Joe and him had successfully infiltrated the gunboat, but unfortunately for them, they weren't alone. At least, unfortunate for the Covenant. A single Sangheili stood before them, only to have an energy blade cut its throat open. The wound was instantly cauterized and the Elite fell to the floor. The thud instantly drew the attention of the other three Sangheili in the troop bay, one of them being an Zealot. The holy warrior drew its energy blade and moved for Clayton, it's Minor-class counterparts engaging Joe. Clayton's energy sword clashed with the Zealot's, creating a brilliant flash of blue light. The Sangheili attempted to jab the Spartan's lower rib cage with it's wrist-mounted energy dagger. Clayton caught the alien's hand, using his might to keep the protruding blade at bay.

"You think your so clever." Clayton said.

The Sangheili cocked it's head to the side before raising it's hooved foot and kicking Clayton backwards. The Spartan merely stumbled before colliding blades once more. Clayton possessed this sword for twelve years, but that didn't mean he had skill with it. He was obviously struggling and he knew his assailant was aware for the Elite was toying with him.

'Whats so hard about swish, swish, stab?' He thought to himself.

Clayton acted, planting a punch firmly on the side of the Zealot's armored face. The alien shifted to the side, shaking it's head. It glared at him and roared. Charging once more, the Sangheili hopped in the air and attempted to plunge the blade through Clay's chest. Time seemed to slow as Clayton's advanced reflexes analyzed the situation. Quickly thinking, he drew his knife in his left hand and raised the sword in his right. The blades met, redirecting the path of the Zealot's weapon. Clayton's knife was driven into the alien's side. It howled and Clayton retracted the metal blade, following it up with a swift swipe of the sword through his enemies leg. Collapsing to the ground, the Elite howled in anger before Clayton silenced it's cries. He pulled the sword from its abdomen and deactivated it, placing it back on his hip.

Joe held one of the Minors in a strangle hold. The second one was lying on the floor but quickly stood back up. It began to charge, only for Joe to use his spare hand to grab his knife from it's sheath and throw it. The knife dug into the alien's skull and it collapsed to the ground. Joe turned his attention back to his captive and grabbed a hold of it's mandibles. Once his hold was secured, he swiftly pulled back. A loud snap originated from the Minor's neck and Joe let it fall to the floor.

"Good?" He asked as he looked up.

Clayton nodded. "You know how to fly one of these things?"

"You really think I'd know how?"

Clayton tried to shrug, but gave up on it. "Well, I guess we just wait for the pilot to get us clear of the jammed zone, call \_The Voyager\_, and hope they can come get us."

"Sounds good. I'll just go take a nap in the corner." Joe said, setting his rifle down and sitting against the wall.

"I'll stay on watch, make sure that no one else appears from nowhere."

"Plus you got the nap on the way here." Joe pointed out.

"Fair enough." Clayton answered with some amusement.

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><p>"This is Clayton Echo-159 of the <em>UNSC Voyager<em>, does anyone read?" Clayton asked for about the millionth time. His index and middle finger rested on the side of the helmet.

Clayton shook his head when no one replied. He was afraid to set up a beacon, not wanting any Covenant to trace it. Joe still lay in the corner, snoozing. Clayton hoped to god that someone managed to get word out. Winter Contingency? This was insane! Covenant on the most fortified Human world other than Earth! Reach would be no pushover, but Clayton honestly feared the worst. Stellar City marked the first time Clayton engaged Covenant in the field and Nova had lost two members and Clayton's armor wasn't exactly in excellent condition. His chest plate was charred and his right EVA shoulder pad had a deep cut in it. He would definitely need to get his armor reconfigured when he got back to the cruiser, but in a time like this it wasn't exactly a good time for a wardrobe change. However, it's a little hard to fight with damaged Mjolnir armor.

Clayton looked to Joe. His friend looked peaceful, it reminded him of when they used to sleep against a tree in the middle of summer before the glassing of Freedom. Sadly, good things must come to an end, but Clayton's childhood met a very abrupt and horrid one. Suddenly, his comm went alive, albeit static.

"Come in! Spartan Clayton Echo-159! This is Captain Olecksi! I'm currently tracking your suit. What are you doing on a Covenant Phantom?"

"Needed a ride home, sir. Covenant jammed the comms at Stellar City."

"I see. Where is Captain Preston?"

"KIA, along with Nathaniel."

There was a moment of silence between the two.

"Sorry to hear. We are sending a Pelican to retrieve you now. I'm sending coordinates to your HUD telling you where to jump from the Phantom."

A blip popped in the corner of Clay's HUD.

"Received. See you soon, Captain."

"Likewise, Lieutenant."

Clayton almost forgot, he was unofficially a Captain now. He would catch up Olecksi upon his return. He turned back to his partner and approached him. The Spartan lightly kicked the resting body.

"Yes." Joe replied with little emotion.

"Come on. Olecksi contacted me and gave me coordinates for where we need to jump." Clayton explained.

"Well, we can't open the bay doors. What about the bottom drop hatch?"

"My thoughts exactly." Clayton said as he turned towards a small switch near the rear of the Phantom.

He had read the coordinates and compared it to the mini map he had of



the sector. They were just about to match up. He struck the button with a fist. A circular door in the flooring opened up, revealing the terrain below.

"Ready to go...Joe, what are you doing?"

The sniper was placing frag grenade inside of a panel he had taken off the wall near the anti-gravity engines.

"Giving them a little parting gift." He said.

Pulling the pin, he quickly ran over to the hatch and pencil dived through. Clayton looked up at the panel briefly before jumping himself. Both Spartans landed with a thud on the dirt. The area was a small clearing surrounded by trees. The Spartans stood, watching the Phantom fly off before exploding in the distance. It's engine ignited in a brilliant purple flame before disappearing beyond the trees. A loud rumble followed. The pair looked at one another.

"When did they say the drop ship would get here?" Joe asked.

Clayton cocked his head to the side before having his attention drawn by a roaring sound coming towards them. The Pelican emerged over the trees and descended in front of them. The bay door opened and a two Marines hopped out. They pointed their battle rifles in a multitude of directions before noticing the Spartans before them. They saluted as the towering warriors moved past them into the troop bay. Clayton nodded to both of them before boarding. The Marines climbed aboard after them and the bay door sealed shut. Clayton took a seat and removed his helmet. He let out a deep exhale as he set it to his right. Joe sat to his left and the Marines sat across from them.

"Looks like you took a beating, Spartan." One of them said. Clayton's brown eyes met the Marine's own blue. "Yeah, I suppose we did."

"Great! No way in hell we are surviving this." The other Marine remarked.

Clayton shook his head. "Don't talk like that. It's negativity like that that gets people killed and losses wars."

The Marine nodded. He was breathing heavily. "You ok, Marine?" Clayton asked.

The Marine had tears welling up in his eyes. "I'm sorry, Sir. I have a wife and a daughter on Earth waiting for me to come home. If the stories are correct, the odds of surviving a Covenant invasion are not very good."

Clayton had a sympathetic look on his face. This man may never see his loved ones again. He was no where near the first in a war that's claimed millions.

"I'm sorry. But Reach isn't a outer colony. Be lucky your here and not on, say, Harvest. Your odds are greater on this world."

The Marine tried to act like Clay's words were soothing, but the Spartan knew damn well that they weren't. He had small portions of

understanding surrounding this scenario, his mother dying and all, but someone's wife and child was completely different. Clayton had zero understanding of that.

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><p>The Pelican soared into orbit. A vigorous orbital battle was underway against three UNSC cruisers and two Covenant corvettes. Clayton could hear the pilot barking into his communications system in the cockpit as the Pelican shook violently. Clayton stood up and slid his helmet over his head. He moved towards the cockpit and placed his hand on the pilots chair. The battle was raging around them, Seraphs chased after Longsword strike fighters.<p>

"Captain Olecksi! Prepare the hanger for our arrival!" The pilot yelled, swaying the Pelican to the left to dodge Covenant flak from the leftmost corvette.

"It will be done. Be quick, we can't risk the Covenant boarding the ship!" The Captain replied.

The pilot pushed forward on a lever. The Pelican gave a burst of speed as the barreled past explosions and allied/hostile fighters. The ship approached \_The Voyager\_ at a quickened pace. The pilot flew through the hanger shielding and pulled the lever back, bringing the Pelican to a sudden stop as it hovered over the titanium floors.

"Captain. You may seal the doors." The pilot stated.

The bay doors emerged from the far left side of the gap. Door after door ejected from the larger prior to it until the hanger was sealed off.

"Confirmed, thank you for bringing my Spartans back home." The Russian responded.

"Your welcome, Sir." Clayton heard the pilot respond as he marched back to the troop bay. The Pelican opened itself up, revealing the bustling hanger bay of \_The Voyager\_. Clayton stepped out and began to run towards the bridge, Joe close behind. The pair maneuvered the hallways, sprinting past several Marines and other personnel scurrying around to get to their positions. The Spartans ran into an elevator that brought them downward to the bridge. The doors opened and the command center was revealed to them. Clayton started out in a slight jog, making his way around a holo-table used for strategy and other needs, then proceeding down a narrow path elevated with two sections of terminals lowered in the floor flanking it. A figure in a UNSC Navy officer uniform stood, his legs spread the length of his shoulders and head held erect as he observed the battle before him.

"Captain?"

The officer turned. His face was quite stereotypical for a Russian. "Lieutenants!" Olecksi greeted the pair. "You look like hell, Clayton." The man observed the Spartan's damaged armor.

"Apologies for not dressing up, Sir." He responded.

"Yes, you'll need a full workup in order to effectively lead Nova into battle." Olecki stated as he placed his right hand on Clay's armored shoulder.

"Sir? How did you..."

"Preston left it in his file. Should anything happen to him, you are to take command. So my apologies for using your old rank, Captain." Olecki interrupted. The ship captain shook Clayton before proceeding, the ship slightly rumbling due to cannon fire.

"Sir, the Covenant corvettes are retreating into slipspace!" One of the women on the terminals reported.

"Excellent, allow the point-defense system cool down and keep the archer missiles primed." Olecki responded.

"On it, Captain!"

Captain Olecki turned back to the Spartans. "As for you, Clayton, you need armor repairs."

"Sir, I'd like to request a new configuration."

The Captain stared at Clayton with curiosity. "Marathon-class cruisers are not just equipped with various sets of Mjolnir armor, I'm sure you know this."

Clayton nodded, however, Olecki spoke up. "But your lucky. We have a prototype helmet that is compatible with Mark V. bases. Don't worry, it comes with shoulders, a chest plate, and so on. ONI wanted it to be field tested and it seems like your the perfect candidate. Not to mention the perfect environment." The Captain commented, looking down at Reach of which was undergoing invasion.

"Thank you, Sir. You will not regret your decision." Clayton stated, expressing his gratitude.

"I know I won't. Echo Company was designed to be the middle ground between S-IIIs and S-IIIs, therefore I have full belief that you will show no issue with this armor, nor do I believe you will falter on your leadership role. Come, we must get you armored. Additionally, I have two extra surprises for you. Actually, if you count individual bodies, I have five." Olecki smiled as he marched past the Spartans.

The pair exchanged a glance, Joe raising his hands indicating he didn't know what the Captain was talking about. The both followed the Olecki from the bridge and into the lift. The doors shut and the elevator started upwards.

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><p>The armory had a single machine with a multitude of mechanical arms resting the far end. A single engineer operated at a terminal. He turned, taking notice of the Captain and the two hulking Spartans.<p>

"Clayton E-159, I presume?" The man inquired.

The Spartan nodded. "Correct."

"Alright, please step onto the indicated pad and I will proceed with the armor transfer."

Clayton did as he was instructed, stepping up onto a small platform and turning towards the group. He made sure his feet were correctly positioned before nodding to the engineer. The man typed in a program and the mechanical arms came to life. They worked on his shoulders and arms first, unhinging his EVA shoulders and the armor beneath it, followed by the forearms. A screen before him instructed him to raise his arms. The Spartan complied as the machinery went to work on his chest plate and back armor, removing the supplemental armor near his groin and waist as it went. Other arms had already eliminated his thigh and calf/shin armor, his knee pads being removed with it. An extra set of arms extended from above and latched onto his EOD helmet, hoisting it off his head. His facial features were revealed to group: Brown eyes and hair accompanied by a broad, strong face.

Then the arms returned, this time holding pieces of armor. A brand new Mark V. base was strapped to him, replacing his previous battle damaged set. Once the base was applied, the additional armor permutations were applied. Multi-threat shoulders were applied as well as a tactical pad on his left forearm. Additional hard pouches were added to his chest plate with the commando variation, a combat knife being placed to the left of his collar. His leg armor had been full restored and a helmet of unknown design descended over his head, latching on and pressuring. His HUD came online and he noticed an instant difference. The visor of his EOD helmet was more streamlined and cut, while this helmet allowed for more broader vision. It had the same CNM module he utilized with his previous helm, which he was thankful for.

The arms retracted and the engineer signaled him that it was OK to step off. The Spartan stepped off. No synchronization time was necessary as it was still at heart the Mark V. The Spartan stood with a stoic appearance, his armor looking more authoritative than his previous.

"Will this configuration suffice for your needs in the field, Sir?" The engineer asked.

"Yes, it will. Thank you. Out of curiosity, what helmet is this?"

"A prototype Mark VI. Your one of the first to utilize it in a combat scenario. They will be widespread to mostly S-IIIs shortly."

Clayton nodded before turning to Oleksi. "Captain, you said something about presents?"

The Ship Captain smiled. "Follow me, Spartan."

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><p>The three of them marched through the corridors of a calmer <em>Voyager</em>. Everyone had returned to their original stations. It was odd, Reach's orbit seemed fairly peaceful compared to the surface. A war was already raging down below and, judging by the way Clayton was moving, he intended to be a part of it. Captain Oleksi

led the towering figures up to through the halls.

"So, Captain, tell me more of these surprises." Clayton asked.

"Well, its obvious that Nova is not at full strength. So four of the surprises are four Spartan-IIIs. You should work well with them though, all four are from Echo-Company so the skill set should be remotely similar. No gaps to bridge." He explained.

"Excellent, we can get right to work then."

"One issue, Clayton. They aren't exactly on board with someone being thrust into a position of authority because of a sudden loss. While they are willing to work it out, some more than others, you WILL need to earn their respect. I wouldn't expect anything from them at the moment besides results." The Captain elaborated.

"Nonsense, they will learn of his capabilities soon enough." Joe stated.

Clayton looked back at his friend. "I understand where they are coming from, Joe. I will have to earn as much from them as they'll have to from me."

Joe nodded in agreement as the turned down a hallway to their right. A small ways down the hall was a door marked as the 'Strategic Planning Holo-room.'

The group stopped when Olecksi turned to them. "I'm going to give you ten minutes to get acquainted with them. After that, you launch to New Alexandria. City is under intense siege and the Army officials are requesting a more...elite...force to assist in the evacuation. I'll explain more once you've finished up."

Clayton nodded silently as Olecksi left the area to attend to other matters. The black-and-orange Spartan pressed his finger to a keypad, opening the doorway. Four armored figures resided in the room. All bore their helmets, turning their heads as the two additional Spartans walked in and shut the door behind them.

Clayton took a moment to observe. One was sitting near the holo-table, another was leaning against the far wall, and the other two were standing, obviously mid-conversation when Clay had walked in.

"So I guess the UNSC doesn't require subordinates to snap to attention when an officer is around." Joe stated.

The two Spartans speaking to one another almost immediately snapped to attention. The one sitting down was delayed, but made her way to the position in line with the other two. The fourth remained on the wall until Clayton's visor covered gaze landed on her. She returned the look through her own helmet, a Mark VI. like his own.

'She must be testing it out as well.' He thought to himself. Otherwise, her yellow armor was bare.

The woman grunted. "I'd rather have a more seasoned leader in a time like this."

Joe stepped forward but Clayton raised his arm. "There is still a thing called common respect. I expect you to at least grant me that before I earn otherwise." He said with a calm tone.

The woman continued her gaze before finally submitting. She walked up to the line, joining the rest with her fists at her sides and staring straight ahead. Clayton scanned the row of Spartans.

"Remove your helmets."

All four simultaneously removed their headgear, revealing four human faces.

"My name is Clayton Echo-159. My compatriot here is Joe Echo-178." Clayton introduced the both of them to the group. He walked up to the first Spartan in line.

He was of a darker ethnicity, skin color wise. There was a bionic arm present in lieu of an organic, indicating a previous decapitation during his operation history. Extra shotgun shells lined his chest plate and a larger shoulder pad was home to a kukri knife. His helmet was EVA, indicating an affinity with vehicle or space warfare. A mild red, comparable to a brick, colored his armor with small amounts of black detail lining his arms and legs.

"Name?"

"Harris Echo-134, Sir."

"Like knives?"

"I do, Sir."

"Got some CQB training under your belt?"

"Lots, Sir."

Harris spoke with a deeper voice but no accent. If anything, he spoke plain American English. Clayton lifted his hands and removed his own helmet, staring into the Spartan's eyes. He nodded. "I won't ask about the arm if it's a touchy subject." Clay's voice was no longer muffled but clear.

"A story possibly for a later date, Sir."

"I'll respect that." Clayton turned and faced the second in line.

A larger man bearing a light orange Grenadier chest piece and helmet stood before him, slightly taller than Clay himself. He was bulky, not just in armor. An AIE-486H Heavy Machine Gun rested behind him.

"Heavy weapons guy?"

The Spartan nodded. His head had a clean buzz cut and and was cleanly shaven. A scar ran over the bridge of his nose.

"Take a hit on the nose there, Spartan..." Clayton trailed off, indicating that he wanted him to finish the sentence.

"Spartan Jacob Echo-097. Took a nasty hit from a Brute during a campaign on Juda IV." He answered.

"At least one of us have fought Covenant before." The snippy yellow Spartan butted in.

"Ash, you don't have to be so harsh." Jacob said, looking past the pink colored Spartan in between them.

Clayton looked to Ash and then to Jacob. "Know of each other already?"

Jacob looked back to him. "Cousins. Lost our home when the Covenant struck Mimba."

"My apologies. Lost ours as well...Freedom." He gestured towards Joe. Clayton's thoughts trailed to his now glassed homeworld. "We are all here for roughly the same reason." He finished.

"Ramses never stood a chance." Harris added, shaking his head in remembrance of his homeworld's final moments. Clayton looked at him with sympathy before moving on.

He moved to the Spartan in pink. She had short, black hair that extended down to her shoulders and an olive skin tone. A small scar marked her cheek. Two bandoliers of grenades clung to her chest piece and a Commando helmet dangled from her right hand. Minus her armor and a slightly lighter skin tone, she reminded him of someone he knew back in boot camp. But he hadn't seen her since graduation. She always seemed more...clingy towards the Spartan.

"How about you?" He asked.

"Samantha Echo-160. Demolitions, Sir." She responded with intensity.

Clayton smirked. "I like this one. What weapon you use?"

"M319 Grenade Launcher, Sir." She held it out in front of her, snapping it in half using the break-action function. She stowed it on her back. Clayton nodded as he moved on.

Last but not least, Ash.

"Name?"

"Ashley Echo-056, Sir." She said plainly.

He looked down at her armored thighs. Twin M7/Caseless Submachine guns rested on the magnetic clamps.

"Specialties?"

"Martial arts and CQB." She answered.

Blonde hair lay draped over her left eye. She had a fairly clean face for specializing in CQB, something that requires a finesse with knives and the human body.

"Don't you worry about my capabilities. I promise I'll try my best."  
He said to her.

"We'll see." She answered.

Admiral Olecksi walked through the doorway, all Spartans turning their attention to him. He held a peculiar object in his hand. It was some form of data chip.

"Clayton, place this in your helmet drive."

The Spartan reached out and took the data chip from the Captain's hand. He reached behind his helmet and slid it into the port.

"Hello!"

Clayton nearly jumped out of his Mjolnir set. "What the hell?!"

"I'm your new artificial intelligence, Savanna!" The AI was ecstatic.

Clayton looked at Olecksi. The Ship Captain chuckled. "She is quite the handful. I think you can handle her."

Savanna appeared on Clay's HUD, taking form of a vibrant young woman wearing something similar to the style in the 21st century. It appeared that she wore pants called 'Spandex' and a plain sweatshirt. She had a gorgeous face and long hair which cascaded down to her rear.

"It's my pleasure to serve Spartan Clayton and Fireteam Nova in the field!"

Clayton stifled a chuckle at her enthusiasm. "Glad to have you aboard."

"Now, we have some business to attend to. Is Fireteam Nova ready to deploy?"

Clayton turned to his new team. All of them slid their helmets over their heads and weapons were retrieved from where they rested. He turned back to Olecksi.

"Sir, Fireteam Nova is ready to deploy into the fight for Reach."

End  
file.